

Talbot County Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 11, 2020
8:30 a.m.
215 Bay Street, Conference Room #1, Easton, MD 21601

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Board Members Present: Judy Bixler, Kelley Cox, Angela Eade, Ian Fleming, Harold Klinger, Mark Salter, Jeff Schneider, Cassandra Vanhooser, Kim Weller

Board Members Absent: John Booth, Laura Price, Al Silverstein, Ben Simons

Staff: Sam Shoge

Recording Secretary: Candace Harris

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the February meeting were presented. Jeff Schneider moved that the minutes be accepted; Ian Fleming seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

III. Old Business

Travel Guide: Ms. Vanhooser reported the Emily Stevenson from *Chesapeake Bay Magazine* is busy selling advertising. The copy has been written, listings have been updated, and everything will be transferred this week to the magazine's layout staff. No word whether we will need real estate ads yet; we will make that determination later.

Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe: The Park Advisory Committee is hosting a Community Meeting on March 16 at 6 p.m. at the BAAM Athletic Center in Easton. Flyers have been printed and distributed widely. In addition, the committee has gone to great lengths to engage the county's African American population for this meeting. The plan should be finished by the end of the summer. Ms. Vanhooser asked the Board to invite people to come out to the meeting.

Tourism Day: Ms. Vanhooser asked Ms. Weller to give an update on Tourism Day. Ms. Weller reported that she and Ms. Vanhooser met with our representatives and had very

positive conversations. Ms. Vanhooser agreed that the day was successful and gave an update on bills affecting the tourism industry, including Sunday hunting for waterfowl.

IV. New Business

Staff Changes in Economic Development & Tourism: Mr. Shoge announced that he has accepted a position as the executive director of the Kent County Chamber of Commerce. His last day is March 31, 2020. Mr. Shoge said that it has been a pleasure working with the department and that he would miss working in Talbot County.

Ms. Vanhooser reported that she has hired Pam Keeton as our new Content Creator. She also reported that decisions about Mr. Shoge's position will be made in the coming weeks. All Board members are invited to a Happy Hour celebration for Sam at Snifter's on Friday, March 27, 2020, at 4 p.m. Mr. Shoge also reported that he is having a baby girl in April.

Business Appreciation Breakfast/Summit: Ms. Vanhooser reported the Business Appreciation Breakfast will be held on April 24 and will be expanded this year. The department has contracted with Dr. Connie Reimers-Hild, a rural futurist from Nebraska who is the owner of Wild Innovation Consulting. A panel discussion will take place after breakfast. The topic of the discussion is the future of Talbot County. A Women Leaders Forum will be offered at noon on Thursday at the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy Conservation Center.

Visitor Center: At a previous meeting, the Board voted to close the Visitors Center on Saturdays because of limited resources and staffing issues. Ms. Vanhooser distributed a summary of the number of visitors to the Visitors Center in the past year. Very few visitors come in on Saturdays, particularly in the colder months. Visitation increases in May, June, July, and August and then falls off again.

Ms. Vanhooser asked members of the Board to volunteer to serve on a Task Force to develop recommendations for the future of the Visitors Center. She will survey the Board and ask for opinions and volunteers.

Open Board Positions: John Booth resigned from the Board stating that he has sold his business, Five Gables Inn and Spa, as well as his residence in St. Michaels. Ms. Vanhooser suggested that the Board consider how to restructure meetings and the make-up of the Board to increase effectiveness. She will include this information in the survey.

National Scenic Byway Program: Senator Ben Cardin sponsored federal legislation to reinstate the National Scenic Byways Program through the U.S. Department of Transportation. Unfortunately, the legislation did not include a funding source. The Eastern Shore Destination Marketing Organizations will meet later in the day (March 11)

to discuss the application process. It will be a partnership with the State of Maryland and the Eastern Shore DMOs.

COVID-19: Ms. Vanhooser reported that she has restructured the department's digital marketing to reach a tighter radius, but she has not stopped advertising. She recommended that every business evaluate its crisis management plan. The State of Maryland Office of Tourism also emailed a survey asking how the virus is affecting the tourism business. Ms. Bixler asked the Board to please respond to the survey.

- V. Representatives from each of the towns reported on news and events taking place in their jurisdictions.
- VI. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m. The next meeting will be held April 8 at 8:30 a.m.